

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 10131

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FOR KRATZER FROM SCHNEIDER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR TECH IN

SUBJECT: TARAPUR: DECLASSIFICATION OF HUBERMAN LETTERS OF JUNE

29, 1976

1. BOTH FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA AND IAEC CHAIRMAN SETHNA TELEPHONED THIS MORNING TO INDICATE THAT THEY HAD NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION OF THE DATA WHICH THEY HAD SUPPLIED FOR THE HUBERMAN LETTER ON HEAVY WATER SUBJECT TO CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS INDICATED BELOW. MEHTA PARTICULARLY ASKED THAT THE DEPARTMENT NOT REPEAT NOT STATE PUBLICLY THAT THE LETTER WAS BEING DECLASSIFIED FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH THE GOI. THE GOI STILL DOES NOT WISH TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE LETTER IN ANY WAY. MEHTA AND SETHNA INDICATED THAT THE DATA WHICH THEY HAD PROVIDED COULD BE OBTAINED FROM ANNUAL UNCLASSIFIED REPORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINISTRY OF FERTILIZER, MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND THE FERTILIZER CORPORATION OF INDIA. THEREFORE, IT COULD BE DECLASSIFIED.

2. SETHNA WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT ACCURACY OF DATA AND THEREFORE WE READ TO HIM THE TEXT OF THE SECOND FULL PARAGRAPH ON PAGE 2 (WHICH BEGINS "WHILE THE CIRUS REACTOR...") AND THE SENTENCES ON NANGAL AT THE BOTTOM OF PAGE 4 WHICH READ, "CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLANT WAS BEGUN IN 1951 AND COMPLETED IN 1961. PRODUCTION SINCE THAT TIME HAS BEEN AT AVERAGE RATE OF 12-15

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TONS ANNUALLY."

3. IN REGARD TO THE FORMER PARAGRAPH ON THE CIRUS REACTOR, SETHNA WANTED THE LANGUAGE OF THE LAST PART OF THE FIRST SENTENCE CHANGED TO READ "AND ACCUMULATIVE MEGAWATT DAYS OF REACTOR OPERATION BY THE END OF 1964 WAS OF THE ORDER OF ONLY 5900." WE POINTED OUT THAT THE LETTER HAD ALREADY BEEN SENT AND WE CONSIDERED THE LANGUAGE OF THE LETTER AS SENT HAD THE SAME MEANING. HE WAS NONETHELESS CONCERNED, APPARENTLY BECAUSE HE HAD RECEIVED THE DATE OF 1964 FROM BOMBAY ON THIS ITEM. WHILE WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO OBLIGE SETHNA IF POSSIBLE, WE CONSIDER THE MEANING OF THE EXISTING SENTENCE TO BE SIMILAR TO HIS PREFERRED VERSION. SETHNA SAID THAT THERE WAS A FACTUAL ERROR IN THE SECOND SENTENCE WHICH SHOULD START WITH THE WORDS "BY 1964 REPEAT 1964" INSTEAD OF "1966, REPEAT 1966". HE EXPLAINED THAT ROUTINE OPERATION OF CIRUS IN FACT BEGAN IN 1964 REPEAT 1964 AT WHICH TIME INDIA HAD SOME 38 TONS OF HEAVY WATER FROM NANGAL. HE ASKED THAT THIS BE CHANGED AND WE CONCUR IN HIS RECOMMENDATION, ALTHOUGH WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S ORIGINAL DRAFT CARRIED 1966 AND SETHNA DID NOT CHALLENGE IT WHEN HE REVIEWED IT IN JUNE.

4. IN REGARD TO THE SENTENCES ON NANGAL, SETHNA SAID THAT THE AVERAGE RATE OF PRODUCTION SINCE 1961 SHOULD BE 11 TONS, REPEAT 11 TONS. HE SAID THAT IN SOME YEARS PRODUCTION HAD IN FACT BEEN BETWEEN 12 AND 15 TONS BUT THERE HAD BEEN PERIODS OF SHUT DOWN DUE TO POWER FAILURE AT BAKKRA WHEN PRODUCTION HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLY LESS AND THEREFORE THE AVERAGE WAS ONLY 11 TONS. WE POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD SEEN THESE FIGURES IN JUNE AND THE LETTER HAD ALREADY BEEN SENT. HE SAID THAT PERHAPS IT COULD BE MAINTAINED THAT THE PRODUCTION WAS BETWEEN 12 AND 15 TONS EXCEPT FOR YEARS DURING POWER FAILURES, BUT HE PREFERRED THAT THE NUMBER BE CHANGED. ASIDE FROM THESE POINTS HE HAD NO DIFFICULTY WITH THE TEXT WE READ TO HIM.

5. SETHNA ALSO REPEATED ALL OF THE OTHER DATA WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY GIVEN US AND WHICH HAS BEEN PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.

6. FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA TELEPHONED LATER TO ASK ABOUT THE BUY-BACK LETTER. WAS ANYTHING REQUIRED OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ON THIS SUBJECT AT THE PRESENT TIME? WE TOLD HIM THAT WE HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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WISHED THE GOI TO KNOW OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE LETTER BUT THAT UNTIL SUCH TIME AS WE MIGHT INDICATE OUR INTEREST IN DISCUSSING THE ISSUE WITH THE GOI WE WOULD NOT EXPECT ANY OFFICIAL INDIAN COMMENT. WE WOULD INFORM THE INDIANS OF OUR INTENTION TO DECLASSIFY THE LETTER AT SUCH TIME AS WE MIGHT RAISE THE ISSUE WITH THEM. WE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH MEA AND IAEC OFFICIALS HAD IN PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS INDICATED THAT US REPURCHASE OF IRRADIATED FUEL MATERIAL WAS AN OPTION AVAILABLE TO US. MEHTA REPLIED THAT

THE MINISTRY WOULD HAVE TO EXAMINE THIS PROPOSAL CAREFULLY TO SEE EXACTLY WHAT THE PROBLEMS MIGHT BE. WE LATER DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT WITH SETHNA SAYING THAT WE PRESUMED WASHINGTON HAD IN MIND THE REPURCHASE OF SPENT FUEL. HE SAID HE COULD NOT SPEAK OFFICIALLY FOR THE GOI ON THIS MATTER BUT REPURCHASE OF SPENT FUEL WOULD BE NO PROBLEM TO HIM. THE WAY HE SAID THIS INDICATED HE WOULD BE VERY PLEASED TO GET RID OF HIS SPENT FUEL IN THAT FORM. HE SAID THAT IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW THERE WOULD BE TWO CONDITIONS TO THE BUY-BACK OPTION. THE FIRST WOULD BE A SATISFACTORY PRICE AND THE SECOND WOULD BE THAT INDIA WOULD HAVE TO BE ASSURED THAT IT WOULD BE PROVIDED ENRICHED URANIUM TO USE AS FUEL FOR TARAPUR. HE THEN SAID THAT INDIA WOULD EITHER RETURN THE IRRADIATED FUEL TO US OR MIGHT USE THE PLUTONIUM IN A MIXED OXIDE FUEL FOR TARAPUR. IN ANY EVENT, HE MADE HIS PERSONAL VIEW CLEAR THAT HE WOULD WELCOME THE BUY-BACK OPTION.

7. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE DATE OF 1966 BE CORRECTED TO READ 1964. WE LEAVE TO THE DEPARTMENT WHAT TO DO ABOUT SETHNA'S OTHER PROBLEMS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT HE HAS SEEN MUCH OF THESE DATA BEFORE AND NOT CHALLENGED THEM. IT IS CLEAR FROM WHAT MEHTA SAID ABOUT MEA'S NEED TO STUDY THE BUY-BACK OPTION (AND SETHNA LET DROP THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD HAVE TO APPROVE IT, WHICH NO DOUBT IS TRUE) THAT WE DO NOT YET HAVE A FORMAL GOI POSITION ON THIS SUBJECT DESPITE THE STATEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE TO US AT VERY HIGH LEVELS IN THE GOI. WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN EVERY INDICATION, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOI OFFICIALS ARE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THIS OPTION.

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